

TRINITY CHARGE--THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Ralph C. Link, Pastor

Christ Church, Duncannon 9:00 A.M.
Trinity Church, New Bloomfield 10:30 A.M.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP October 28, 1973

The Organ Prelude

*The Hymn of Praise 322

*The Call to Worship

*The Prayer of Confession (Unison)

O Lord, Our Father, we come to you as a people who are a part of the community of believers. We seek your guidance for we know that the Church cannot exist without it. Forgive each member of Your Church for their individual and corporate sins. Keep us true to the commitment of upbuilding the Church throughout the world. Keep us from the divisions that separate us from others. And always keep us steadfast in Your love, in Jesus Name. Amen.

*The Kyrie

*The Assurance of Pardon

The Scripture --- Acts 20:17-32

*The Gloria Patri

The Anthem (Trinity)

The Pastoral Prayer

The Announcements

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

*The Doxology

*The Offering Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

The Hymn of Meditation 323

The Sermon --- "Feeding The Church!"

The Sermon Prayer

*The Hymn of Response 292

*The Benediction

*The Threefold Amen

*The Postlude

*Congregation Stands

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

This morning at 10:30 Mr. John Emig is preaching at Newport. This is an opportunity for our congregation to hear this young man to consider him as the next Pastor.

Blood donors are still needed to replace blood given to Cheryl Snyder. If you can donate blood, please donate at Polyclinic Hospital and have the blood credited to Cheryl Snyder.

Bible Study will be held on Wed. Oct. 31st at 7:30 PM in the church in Duncannon.

Next Sunday the hours of worship will change in each church. Trinity 9:00 AM; Christ 10:30 AM.

CHRIST CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Men's Brotherhood will conduct the worship at the Kinkora Home on Sunday Nov. 4th at 2:00 PM. The Women's Guild will go to the home on Nov. 8th at 6:30 PM to provide entertainment for the patients.

TRINITY CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Youth Fellowship will meet at Keboch tonight at 6:30 PM. All of the youth are asked to attend this meeting. If you have insurance money, please bring it with you.

Tonight at 7:00 PM the first rehearsal for the Community Christmas Cantata will be held in Keboch Church. The Cantata will be given on Dec. 16th at Keboch Church at 7:30 PM. All interested singers are asked to join this town choir.

NAME ALL MEN Nov 10, 7:30 PM

"THE CARE AND FEEDING OF THE CHURCH!"

Scripture: Acts 20:17-32

Sermon Text: Acts 20:28,

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which He obtained with His own blood."

The care and feeding of anything, whether it be a person, an animal, a plant, or an institution, requires that it have the proper food as well as being nurtured and sustained with love and concern. This is known in some areas as, "tender loving care."

In the block of Scripture we read this morning, Paul is giving what amounts to a farewell address to the elders at Ephesus. He tells of his going to Jerusalem and the likelihood of never returning. He recounts his service among them, as well as the problems he has faced and overcome. But he also tells them of the dangers the church will probably face in the future. But woven into the fabric of this Scripture is one verse that I want to use as my text for today. It is the 28th verse of this 20th chapter of Acts, and Paul writes,

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which He obtained with His own blood."

Paul is pointing out that they must look to themselves, then look to the congregation, and then to look to the church.

When Paul tells them to, "Take heed to yourselves," he is really saying they should be striving to make their lives what they should be. All of the foregoing Scripture is not said to merely impress these men, but is to say in effect, "This is what I have done while I have been among you, and this is what you now must do on your own. I have endured hardships, I have endured privations of all kinds, I have had pain of heart and anguish of soul, but I have remained faithful to my task. This you must do as well."

"A woman in New York, who belonged to a labor union, was recently fined by the union because she attended her church's worship service instead of a union meeting. Both occasions were being held at the same hour. When she appealed the case the presiding judge ruled in favor of the union. She had to pay the fine or give up her job."

This woman was taking heed to herself. She was striving to make of her life what it should be. This is one of the hardships we face in trying to be Christian in the 20th century. We must continually make choices as to whom and what we will serve. Just as Paul had to ward off the onslaughts of hostile Jews and Gentiles, so we are called upon to ward off the onslaughts of labor unions and the many things of the world that would prevent us from being a part of the church.

As individuals in the church today we face the same challenges as those faced by the early Christians, with one basic difference. The early Christians were called upon to risk life and limb and we are not. Perhaps this is one reason why the average member of a congregation is rather lax.

To be a member is a call to commitment. It is a call to a life of service. This means not just being a name on a roll, but an active participating member in all ways. It may mean teaching a class or leading a discussion. It may mean serving on a board or serving tables at a dinner. Whatever the task to be done in the congregation, it must be performed by people, and people means individuals such as you and I.

This is basically what Paul is saying when he tells them to "Take heed to themselves." He is telling them to take a little self-examination of themselves. Self-examination is a prerequisite to a life of service. It helps an individual to see just where he stands in relation to being a member of the congregation.

But Paul not only admonished the elders to "take heed to themselves," but to take heed to "all the flock." The flock naturally would be the congregation of believers. This would mean to look after their needs both as a group and as individuals. Too often we have a tendency to look upon the other members as just people we sit next to on a Sunday morning, and then forget them until the next Sunday. We neglect to think of them as people who have problems and worries just like us.

"In a novel about post-war Japan, the story is told of an American who saw a taxi turn a corner and run down an old man crossing the street. None of the passersby went to the aid of the old man, only the American, and he yelled at the spectators to call an ambulance. Even the police wouldn't help; they would only call the proper authorities. The American went into a helpless rage and had to be dragged from the scene. His Japanese companion later explained to him that the Japanese believed that whenever someone saved another's life, he became responsible for that person. The Japanese, he further explained, were so burdened with cares and woes of their own in the post-war world that they could not save the lives of others and add that many more burdens to their own."

If our attitude toward others, becomes one of being so overwhelmed with our problems and our difficulties, that we cannot help others, then we are certainly far from being a Christian. To be a Christian and in particular a member of a congregation, is to be a servant of others.

In the Gospel of John we read of the incident where Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. Peter answers that he does. Whereby Jesus tells him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he asks Peter the same question and again Peter answers in the affirmative. A second time Jesus tells him, "Tend my lambs." A third time Jesus asks Peter the same question and Peter by this time is rather perturbed, for he replies, "Lord, you know everything, you know that

"I love you." And again Jesus tells him very simply, "Feed my sheep." This is very similar to what Paul is saying to the elders when he tells them to, "Feed the church of the Lord." The church is made up of all the separate congregations of people. It is not just one little building sitting somewhere, but is instead all of the people who profess a belief in Christ.

Feeding the church of the Lord requires that it have the proper food and this would be the Word of God. It requires the proper doctrines and beliefs. It requires a concerned and loving clergy, and it requires a dedicated and committed laity. Now all of this is the ideal, and we know that the ideal is seldom achieved in anything.

Martin Luther found the church to be far less than the ideal and thus we had the Reformation. Zwingli, Melancthon, Calvin, Knox and others each found it to be less than the ideal. Each sought in his own way to make the church spotless within and without.

One of the hymns written about the church is entitled, "The Church's One Foundation." This hymn was written by Rev. Samuel John Stone. Mr. Stone was an Anglican clergyman.

"He was the pastor of a small city church in London. During the day the area had a population of ten thousand, and at night it had a population of one hundred fifty. Mr. Stone renovated his church largely at his own expense. He opened his church at six-thirty in the morning for the crowds of office workers who had no place to go between the arrival of commuter trains and the opening of offices. He wrote the hymn for two reasons. The first was to educate the worshipers who recited the Apostle's Creed and had no idea what it meant. The second reason was to back up a friend who was involved in a controversy that was wracking the Anglican church from one end to the other. The controversy was liberalism vs. fundamentalism. The original third verse of this hymn is not to be found in any hymnals today. The reason, the verse was a

part of the mud-slinging against those who disagreed with his friend. The verse reads:

'The church shall never perish! Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide sustain and cherish, is with her to the end;
Though there be those that hate her, and false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor, she ever shall prevail.'

We can read in almost any religious journal or periodical the evidence that this controversy is still with us. The problem of liberalism versus fundamentalism is still being discussed and argued through out all of the church.

The feeding of the church very simply, is the feeding of Jesus Christ to its people and members. We refer to the church as the "Congregation of Believers, or, "An Assembly of God's People," or as, "A Society of Believers." Jesus Himself said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." To be gathered together in His name means for the purpose He ordained. It is through the church that the great truths of Christianity are preached and proclaimed. The church must have its functions and services just as any other organization. But its functions must never overshadow its real purpose of proclaiming the eternal truth of Christ. The church must always bear witness to the life, the ministry, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant by "Feeding the church of the Lord."

We must look to ourselves as individuals. We must look to the flock. We must feed the church of the Lord. Basically all three are acts of Care and Feeding. May we ever seek to continue feeding all three. Through our efforts may we strive to keep the church strong and growing, vital and alive. May it ever remain as in the immortal words of that familiar hymn, "Like a mighty army moves the church of God."